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3. (Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said step of applying hydrogen peroxide to said packaging sheet material comprises applying liquid hydrogen peroxide at a concentration of from 20% by weight to 40% by weight.

4. (Twice Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said step of applying hydrogen peroxide to said packaging sheet material comprises the step of immersing said packaging sheet material in a hydrogen peroxide bath at a temperature comprised between 15 degrees Centigrade and 80 degrees Centigrade, for a time interval of from 0.5 seconds to 2 seconds.

B1 5. (Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said step of removing a substantial amount of hydrogen peroxide from said packaging sheet material comprises blowing a stream of heated air, heated to a temperature from 80 degrees Centigrade to 150 degrees Centigrade onto said packaging sheet material.

6. (Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said step of irradiating the packaging sheet material with light including at least one UV wavelength, comprises of irradiating said packaging sheet material with polychromatic UV light.

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B1 7. (Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said step of irradiating the packaging sheet material with light including at least one UV wavelength, comprises irradiating said packaging sheet material with UV light at a wavelength of 222nm.

9. (Twice Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said packaging sheet material is a web unwound from a roll.

B2 10. (Twice Amended) Method according to claim 20, wherein said packaging sheet material is a blank.

11. (Twice Amended) Apparatus for sterilizing a packaging sheet material according to the method defined in claim 20, comprising:

-means for applying hydrogen peroxide to a packaging sheet material moving in an advancement direction,

B3 -means for irradiating the packaging sheet material with light including at least one UV wavelength between 200nm and 320nm, arranged downstream of said means for applying hydrogen peroxide, with respect to said advancement direction, and;

-means for removing the hydrogen peroxide from the surface of the packaging sheet material,

said means for removing the hydrogen peroxide from the surface of the packaging sheet material being interposed between said means for applying hydrogen peroxide and said

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means for irradiating the packaging material with light including at least one UV wavelength between 200nm and 320nm and in that said means for irradiating are arranged only downstream of the means for removing, whereby a residual or trace quantity of hydrogen peroxide absorbed by or located adjacent to any microorganisms present on said packaging sheet material is directly targeted with UV radiation.

Please add new claim 20 as follows:

20. (New) A method for sterilizing a packaging sheet material, the method

= comprising:

soe applying hydrogen peroxide to the packaging sheet material; |

New limitation
NW [removing a substantial amount of the hydrogen peroxide from a surface of the packaging sheet material] such that a residual quantity of the hydrogen peroxide is absorbed by or located at microorganisms present on a surface of the packaging sheet material; and

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| irradiating the packaging sheet material with light including at least one UV wavelength between about 200nm and 320nm^{NW} [wherein the operation of removing a substantial amount of the hydrogen peroxide] from the surface of the packaging material is done after the operation of applying hydrogen peroxide to the packaging material and before the operation of irradiating the packaging sheet material such that the residual quantity of hydrogen peroxide absorbed by or located at the microorganisms present on the surface of the packaging sheet material is directly targeted during the irradiation operation. |

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need UV